

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2016

The Honorable John Koskinen  
Commissioner  
Internal Revenue Service  
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Koskinen:

On March 7, following reports of lax security and identity theft, the IRS discontinued a program aimed at providing additional security for taxpayers at risk of identity theft. As identity thieves become more sophisticated and continue to target American taxpayers, it is essential that the IRS do everything it can to protect individuals' information and to enable them to file their taxes securely.

The IRS' Identity Protection Personal Identity Number (IP PIN) program was established to provide taxpayers with an added level of security when filing their tax return. The six-digit PINs were meant to protect against misuse of a Social Security Number on a fraudulent federal income tax return. Individual who requested such a PIN would have the number mailed to them and would be required to include that number on any tax return. Nearly 3 million individuals, many of them past victims of identity theft, requested an IP PIN for additional protection.

Unfortunately, the IP PIN system had a security flaw. As was widely reported, the online application for an IP PIN is vulnerable to scam artists who could use information they had already stolen from individuals to answer security questions and access a PIN. Of the 83,000 tax returns already filed by individuals who requested their IP PIN through the online system, 800 returns have already been confirmed to be fraudulent, another 8,000 are suspect enough to require further screening, and reports indicate that some of the 16,000 already processed were actually fraudulent.

These levels of suspected fraud in a system designed to help victims of identity theft is unacceptable. I commend the IRS for making the decision to remove the online application for an IP PIN. However, removing the online IP PIN request system is just one temporary step. Our taxpayers should have details about what steps the IRS intends to take to add new protections to the IRS computer systems. What steps will the agency take now to provide taxpayers with a secure method to file their taxes without risking identity theft? Millions of Americans have yet to file their 2015 tax return, and they should know that the IRS is taking steps to ensure that a system intended to make their tax return more secure, is effective and working. Please provide to me information about the IRS' next steps in improving security for taxpayers, particularly

those who have been victims of identity theft previously. I look forward to hearing from you by April 4, 2016.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" written in a large, rounded script, and "McCaskill" following in a similar but slightly more compact style.

Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator